

"This might be effected in your country, where the feeling is so strong and general in favour of enterprises of public utility, by the association of a number of benevolent friends of art and the people, who might employ a number of skilful artists to lithograph the famous cartoons at Hampton Court, in order to render them accessible, at a small price, to the lower classes. In England the knowledge of Scripture is so widely disseminated, that the exalted and noble interpretations of apostolical history would meet with an extraordinary reception. At the same time the people would have a scale whereby to enable them to determine the truly great and beautiful, and to teach them to despise the base and ignoble. In this manner, by degrees, the choice productions of the immense treasures of art, foreign as well as native, which Great Britain possesses, might become the common property of the nation."

But we may not afford more space to the subject just now; our intention is not to write an account of the place, but simply to say to our readers,—take a holiday and go to Hampton Court.\*

## ROMANESQUE AND SARACENIC ART.

MOSQUES AND MOORISH PALACES.

THE subject of the last lecture by Mr. Ralph Wornum, at the Government School of Design, Somerset House, was the Romanesque and Saracenic art of the middle ages.

In the preceding, said the lecturer, I introduced the subject of Christian symbolism and Byzantine art; and you will find, as we advance, that the elements then pointed out perform a very prominent part in the whole system of decoration throughout the middle ages, until the establishment of the cinque-cento, when all symbolic elements were utterly discarded, even in Germany. Gothic art itself ceased to be practised. The Elizabethan in England—our version of the Italian Renaissance—and the Louis Quatorze in France, superseded all other styles in a later period. The symbolic elements, however, of the Romanesque styles were not limited to the Christian world; they entered originally largely into Saracenic art, as I shall presently show: they are prominent at Cairo, and they can be slightly traced even in the later works of the Alhambra.

By the term Romanesque (on the utility of which the lecturer made a few remarks) we designate all the middle-age architecture of Europe not *Pointed* or *Gothic*, its development being horizontal rather than vertical. The Byzantine, Lombard, Norman, and even our own Saxon, are Romanesque in style. The Egyptian Romanesque presented a modification of the semicircular with the pointed arch. For many ages all ecclesiastical architecture was either Romanesque or Gothic: the Italian and classical styles were not applied to ecclesiastical purposes before the sixteenth century. The cross and dome were the only elements of the earlier style of decoration that were preserved, and though as architectural designs the cinque-cento styles surpassed the earlier in their forms, more especially in exterior, it is only in rare exceptions that they have even equalled the gorgeous decoration of the early Romanesque works, and more especially the Byzantine, as St. Sophia's at Constantinople, San Vitale at Ravenna, St. Mark's at Venice, or even the cathedrals of Pisa, Monreale, or Messina.

The description of St. Sophia may suffice for all. Forty thousand pounds weight of silver were expended over the altar alone. The whole vault or ceiling of the church was gilded and decorated with the richest mosaics. The walls and pavements were of different coloured marbles, arranged in a variety of geometrical forms. The numerous columns, with their gilded capitals, were all composed of single blocks of the most precious marbles—the pink and white-veined of Phrygia, the dark red of the Nile, the green of Laconia or of Thessaly, the saffron of Lybia, the black and white of Italy or the Bosphorus, and the red porphyry of Egypt. But most of these columns have from the ruins of heathen temples. The whole interior presented one

first looked upon his finished work, exclaimed, "Solomon, I have excelled thee!" Yet the exterior was completely plain—not even decorated with the common symbols of the later Romanesque, which prevailed throughout the whole ornamentation of the middle ages.

The most remarkable feature, perhaps, of Byzantine architecture in general, is its rich interiors as contrasted with its plain exteriors. The whole inner space is covered with ornament, the holy liturgy, or the glorification of Christ, being the subject generally illustrating the dome. The "Majesty" of the west—that is, Christ in a glory with his hands raised, or in the attitude of benediction, is only a summary treatment of the "Liturgy" of the Greeks.

The architecture of Byzantium, or Constantinople, spread in all directions. It extended in this country as far north as York and Hexham; it is still the standard style in Russia, and the exclusive model of the Mahomedans from Benares to Cadiz—from Cairo to Damascus; which last leads us to the second great art-development of the middle ages—the Saracenic—a magnificent system of decoration, and one, perhaps, better than all others suited to the general purposes of ornament,—to furniture, carpets, papers, dinner-services, cabinet-work, and the better materials for costume.

The earliest Saracenic works existing are the great mosques of Cairo in Egypt. The most ancient is that of Amrou, formerly of great magnificence, the whole being painted and gilded, but it is now deserted and a comparative ruin. It is the first building in which the pointed arch was adopted in preference to the round—the common Byzantine form, and, indeed, the universal form up to that time.

A mosque ordinarily consists of a square court surrounded by colonnades, with a basin or laver for ablutions in the centre. This basin is sometimes of itself a handsome building, and is often covered in with a circular or ogee-vaulted dome, surmounted by a crescent. Public baths and schools adjoin the great mosques. Niches in the wall and pulpits indicate the side next Mecca. These are sometimes ornamented with the utmost attainable splendour. The roof of the Mosque of Amrou, supported on 250 columns of precious marbles, is flat, and was painted and gilded after the Egyptian fashion. The columns were mostly taken from ancient edifices; and to show the respect the Arabs had for classical precedents, some of the bases of the columns are composed of capitals turned upside down. Every night the mosque was illuminated by 18,000 lamps, for the study of the Koran, many of the 1,300 copies of which in this one mosque were written entirely in gold.

Another great mosque at Cairo is that of Touloun, built in 876, and still in good preservation. It was designed by a Christian artist in prison. It is one of the most tasteful monuments in the world for stucco-work; and is, perhaps, the most characteristic example of Saracenic art, though the work of a Christian. It is also, thus, a sufficient corroboration of the belief that Saracenic art is only a Mahomedan development of Byzantine art. This mosque is like that of Amrou in plan: but the roof is supported on piers ornamented with four engaged columns. It is of brick, covered with cement; and all the ornaments are in relief, in stucco-work, but uncoloured, except in the sanctuary. The windows are not glazed, but are filled in with a very elegant geometrical tracery of calcareous stone. The whole was erected in two years, at a cost of 100,000 dinars, or nearly 50,000*l.*, and Ahmed Ben Touloun rewarded the architect with 10,000 dinars, or nearly 5,000*l.* (a tenth of the whole cost), for his two years' services.

The Mosque El Azar, or "The Brilliant," is another great early work at Cairo. It was built in 981. The flat roof is supported on 380 marble columns. The principal entrance is ornamented in a style (of later date) at once simple and magnificent in the highest degree. Many of the ornaments are familiar Byzantine forms,—as the trefoil, lily, and scrolls of foliage, in disguise,—the guilloche, fret, zig-zag, &c.

These three mosques are the chief types of Saracenic art, and the only monuments of its original development. Grand mosques, how-

ever, continued to be built at Cairo till as late as the fifteenth century, much in the same style, though somewhat more ornamented, as the Mosque Barbank, of the twelfth century; Kalaoun, of the thirteenth; Hassan, the grandest in the East, of the fourteenth; and the exquisite Del Maged, of the fifteenth century.

The pointed arch is the prevailing form throughout all these structures; but the semicircular, the horse-shoe, ogee, stilted, trefoil, cinquefoil, and scalloped arch also frequently occur.

All were, probably, originally designed to be coloured; those left plain were so, simply, from want of funds. The sum required for gilding and colouring such works, with their myriads of forms, was not much short of that required for their original construction. The grounds were generally blue or red, and the ornaments gilded.

The Arabs, like the Egyptians of old, also coloured the outsides of their houses. At Cairo it was a mark of distinction allowed only to Mecca pilgrims. The prevailing colour in these decorations is vermillion.

Sicily is another great repository of Saracenic art. The principal remain at Palermo, the capital, is the palace of La Ziza. It is richly gilt and decorated, and is very profusely ornamented with geometrical mosaics. Nor were the Saracens less active in Spain. Already, in the tenth century, Cordova was the rival of Damascus or of Cairo. The Arabian writers give an extraordinary account of the palace of Abdu-r-rahman III., at Azzahra, near Cordova. Its roof was supported by upwards of 4,000 pillars of variegated marbles, brought from Carthage, Sfax, and other places in Africa. The floors and walls were decorated with the same material, and the chief apartments with porphyry vases from Greece. In one apartment a fountain of quicksilver reflected in a thousand lights the rays of the sun. The hall of the Khalifa, or Audience Chamber, was of fairy magnificence. The ceiling and walls were of brilliant mosaics, in glass and gold. The tiles of the roof were of pure gold. In the centre of the hall stood a splendid gilt bronze basin, a present of the Emperor Leo, sent from Constantinople. Within the palace was a mosque, not less magnificent, though smaller than that of Cordova itself.

The Alhambra, at Granada, though a much later work, is of sufficient splendour to justify us in believing almost any account of these Moorish palaces, however apparently extravagant. Much of it is still in good preservation. Ibnu-l-ahmar began it in the earlier part of the thirteenth century, and it was only completed by Yusuf I., about a century after. The name Alhambra signifies 'the Red Castle.' It was originally a fortress. Different monarchs completed different portions of it. Yusuf repainted and gilded the whole at an enormous cost. This gorgeous palace was built chiefly by means of tributes paid by Christians for protection. In the opinion of the Moorish architects, it was unrivalled in the whole world; but in comparison with some of the grand works of Cairo, or even of Sicily, there is a gaudy littleness of style about the decoration of the Alhambra which detracts greatly from the due effect of its grander features. The details are very much repeated; a species of lily form incessantly recurs. There is not that Byzantine character about these details which we find in the Cairo mosques. The beauty of this palace is in its general richness of effect, and its endless combinations of columns, arches, and gorgeous surfaces, its gold and silver flowers and its intricate tracery, which all combine to give the impression of extraordinary splendour as a whole, while no particular part commands any special admiration. The principal features are its tracery, its multiplicity of rich columns, the variety and intersection of its arches, and their gilt and gaudy spandrels. The horse-shoe arch is supposed to be characteristic of the Alhambra and of Saracenic art generally; it prevails at Cordova, but I believe nowhere else; certainly not in the Alhambra, where the ordinary, and stilted, pointed, and semicircular arches largely predominate. The scallop is the only approach to the form of the crescent in Saracenic art, except in the crowning and symbolical ornament of domes.

